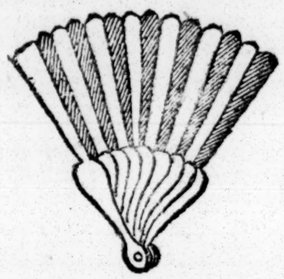
The Cruel STEP-MOTHER;
Or, The UNHAPPY SON.



YOU moſt indulgent parents, lend an ear,
And you a diſmal ſtory ſoon ſhall hear ;
A ſto ry ſtrange, but certain true indeed,
Enou gh to make a heart of ſtone to bleed.
In York, that famous city of renown,
There liv'd a gentleman, one 'ſquire Brown,
Whoſe wealth and riches were exceeding great,
But yet he had no heir to his eſtate.
He had a virtuous, kind, and loving wife,
With whom he liv'd a comfortable life ;
The want of children was their only grief,
But God was pleas'd to ſend them ſome relief.
She did conceive, and with a ſon, we hear,
Great was the joy when ſhe deliver'd were,
Much feaſting, which for many days did laſt,
Both rich and poor did of their bounty taſte.
It pleaſed God the child did live and thrive,
Until it came unto the age of five ;
At five years old his ſorrows ſore begun,
And ſo continued many years to run.
The greateſt pleaſures that we hear can boaſt
So ſudden fade, and are but ſhort at moſt ;
When death approaches, who can ſhun the dart ?
He has command, and ſtrikes up to the heart.
The 'ſqu re's lady was took wond'rous ill.
The doctors us'd in vain their beſt of ſkill.
All cannot do, the fatal ſtroke death gave,
And no man that's born her life can ſave.
Her husband then ſhe ſent for out of hand :
Her weeping friends did now around her ſtand ;
Her husband came, ſhe ſaid to him, My dear,
The time is ſhort I have to tarry here :
Be careful of the darling child your ſon,
See that in virtue' paths he ſtrives to run ;
That I in heaven may ſee him again,
And there in endleſs bliſs with him remain.

For the child's ſake, wed not again, my dear,
For if you do, I cannot reſt, I fear.
Let no ſtep-mother my dear child abuſe,
Whom I ſo tenderly did love and uſe.
My jointure, which is fifty pounds a year,
I leave to him, whom I love moſt dear.
Be you a tender father to my ſon,
Think on my words, when I am dead and gone.
He ſaid, Deareſt, theſe words I'll keep in mind;
I to the child will prove a father kind :
To wrong my child, I wrong myſelf, you know ;
I love the child too well to ſerve it ſo.
Then for her child ſhe ſtraitways did call,
Whilſt tears from her cheeks down did fall ;
And kiſſing him with lips as cold as clay,
The child did to his fainting mother ſay,
Mamma, what makes you kiſs me and cry ?
I hope you will be better ſpeedily ;
I hope I ſhall, ſweet dear, to him ſhe ſaid,
Then turn'd herſelf, and ſtraitway dy'd.
She ſcarce two months in the grave was laid,
Ere he forgot the promiſes he made ;
Which made the proverb true, as we do find,
That out of ſight is quickly out of mind.
Unto a rich and wealthy widow old,
He went a courting oft, as we are told ;
No reſt or quiet would he let her have,
Till her conſent he unto him had gave.
She ſaid, before ſhe to him did engage,
She had a daughter fair, ten years of age ;
And therefore for her dear daughter's ſake,
She was reſolv'd a widow's will to make.
He gave conſent that it ſhould be made,
And in much triumph now theſe couple wed,
But during theſe things were thus even done,
He quite forgot his daughter and his ſon.

His new wife was croſs, and very proud,
And his own ſon never was allowed
With them to dine, but at her chair to ſtand,
Juſt like a footman, waiting her command.
Her daughter ſhe muſt at the table ſit,
And pick and cull the beſt of what is eat :
Beſides a waiting maid too miſs muſt have.
While the poor lad is made a drudge and ſlave.
Altho' he was thus ſcorn'd, yet we find
How fortune unto him did prove ſo kind,
His mother's brother died, as we hear,
And left this boy two hundred pounds a year.
His father then the intereſt was to have,
For to maintain the child ſo fine and brave ;
But if he died ere to age he came,
His father then was to enjoy the ſame.
His ſtep-mother found things were ordered ſo,
She was reſolv'd to work his overthrow,
Cries ſhe, When he is put away and gone,
What's left to him will ſoon become my own.
She with the Devil then did ſtraitway think,
And to her huſband gave a ſleeping drink ;
And as he within the garden lay
Unto the boy ſhe theſe words did ſay,
Go watch your father as he ſleeping lies,
And if thou ſee'ſt him wake, or going to riſe,
Come and ſhew me, make the beſt haſte you can.
And ſo ſhe did this harmleſs youth trapan.
The boy with watching long did go to ſleep,
Then ſoftly ſhe did to his father creep ;
Off from his finger ſhe a ring did take,
On purpoſe of this boy a thief to make.
For as the innocent boy a ſleeping lay,
She in his pocket did the ring convey ;
Then with great joy into the houſe did come :
And ſaid, I hope his buſineſs I have done.
The lad awaking, ſtrait did rub his eyes,
But ſeeing of his father going to riſe,
To inform his mother he ſtraitway did run,
Mean while his father in a-doors did come.
And miſſing of his ring to her did ſay,
My dear, what makes you take my ring away
Cries ſhe, I took it not upon my life ;
You may believe me, as I am your wife.
But if you'd know what is of it become,
I'd have you to examine well your ſon :
As in the garden you did ſleeping doſe,
I ſaw him then a-fumbling at your cloaths.
He went to ſearch his ſon, the ring he found,
Then hand and foot ſtraitway him he bound,
And laſh'd him till the blood did run,
Whilſt ſhe, hard hearted wretch ! ſtood gazing on.
Cries ſhe, now ſend this wicked rogue to ſea,
Leſt that he doth diſgrace the family.
I'll get a maſter ſoon for him, ſhe cry'd,
For he no longer ſhall with me abide.
He gave conſent, and ſhe a maſter got ;
And he was ſent away, hard was his lot.

Where we will leave him to croſs the main,
And turn to this wicked wretch again,
But God, who ſees our actions here below,
He did not let this wretch unpuniſh'd go
For this boys mother to them did appear,
One night when they in bed together were.
This apparition told them of the ring,
And how ſhe ſerv'd the boy in every thing ;
Then did ſhe ſhake the bed whereon they lay,
And then it vaniſhed from them away.
The 'ſquire he was very much ſurpriz'd,
And finding that his wife had told him lies,
To make him ſend his poor boy away,
He went into a ſtrong deſpair they ſay.
To add unto his grief we underſtand,
A letter from his ſon came to his hand :
At Jamaica he was, the letter told,
And to a captain there was baſely ſold.
And as they ſailing were upon the main,
They by a Spaniſh privateer were ta'en :
The ſhip condemn'd, and they were made ſlaves:
This is, kind ſir, ſaid he, my deſperate caſe.
The father ſeeing this, ſwooned away,
Crying to his wife both night and day,
Thou curſed wretch what haſt thou now done,
To make a father thus abuſe his ſon ?
From home in grief he rambled that day,
And to a lawyer went without delay,
Made ſtrait his will, and left his ſon his ſtore,
Then went and hang'd himſelf before his door,
The lawyer finding what he had done,
Did ſtra tway ſend a letter to his ſon,
For to adviſe him to come home with ſpeed ;
And money ſent to ranſom him indeed.
Which letter by good fortune he receiv'd,
His ranſom paid, and quickly was reliev'd ;
He got a ſhip, and home with ſpeed he came.
None but the lawyer did know of the ſame.
He ſoon came home, unto the great ſurprize
Of his baſe mother, who with flatt'ring lies
Would fain excuſe herſelf ; but all in vain :
To law he went with her, and did obtain
The cauſe of her ; five hundred pounds beſide,
Becauſe he ſafely was by her bely'd.
Which vex'd her ſo, it almoſt broke her heart,
To think ſhe with her ill-got gain muſt part.
Her darling daughter being left alone,
Deſpis'd by all, and pitied by none,
She ſold off all ſhe had, and went away,
And has not been heard of to this day.
To ſtep-mothers let this a warning be,
Never to uſe poor children cruelly.
For God will help the widow in diſtreſs,
And be a father to the fatherleſs.
Let parents all beg of the Lord to ſee
Their children bred up to maturity.
'Till for themſelves they're able to provide,
Lord ſend you may be their faithful guide.

W. N. H. HARDING